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be wise to allow some measure of freedom in its application, especially in the case of the smaller States, where the fulfilment of the obligation might possibly lead to occupation of territory by the covenant-breaking State in order to protect those economic interests, which, as a result of the blockade, would be at stake.

## REPATRIATING HALF A MILLION PRISONERS

Special Correspondence

Our readers will find it difficult to realize the well-nigh incredible facts submitted in this special correspondence. Two years after the war is over, there they are prisoners, ill fed, practically unclothed, ravaged by disease, driven like slaves—a horrible fact for men who fought bravely—not hundreds of them, not thousands, not even tens of thousands, but nearly a half million. The encouragement is that neutrals, allies, ex-enemies, Bolshevik, are coming together in the attempt to redeem these too-long-neglected sufferers.

—THE EDITOR.

A GREAT PART of the one million pounds required this year for the carrying on the work of repatriating nearly half a million prisoners still in Germany, Russia, Siberia, and Turkestan, almost two years after the Armistice, has now been made available by the different governments concerned, and the actual task of repatriation is being rapidly carried out by Dr. Fridtjof Nansen under the authority of the League of Nations and in co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the German and the Soviet authorities.

Within the past few weeks the following credits have been received: Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, £35,000 each; Holland, £45,000, with £10,000 additional promised in case the other nations fulfill their allotment; Switzerland, £48,000, and Great Britain, £113,500, with an equal additional sum promised in case the other nations meet their allotments. France has provisionally promised £115,000 and Italy £85,000. The American Red Cross has allotted a million dollars and the American Y. M. C. A. has made a large contribution for the betterment of the conditions of the prisoners, provision of comforts, etc.

The sums actually received will allow the continuance of the work until October. If the French and Italian contributions are received by then, the work will go on until all prisoners are returned to their homes. It may be added that all expenses for repatriating German prisoners are borne by the German Government itself.

To carry out the repatriation, a fleet of ships has been chartered in the name of the League of Nations, most of them to travel between Germany and Russia in the Baltic, but others to make the long six weeks' trip from Hamburg to Vladivostok. In order to keep the expenses at the lowest possible figure, cargoes have been booked on the longer-voyage ships at the same time that prisoners are being transported.

It is, perhaps, interesting that officials of the League of Nations, in the extremely difficult and complicated

task of returning prisoners of war to their homes amidst the most confused political conditions, are directing a small fleet of steamers, securing cargoes, and overseeing all the work necessary to carry out this essential humanitarian work in the most economical way. The execution of the great amount of detail work involved is being carried out by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and by German Government authorities.

On the Baltic, the most important routes, fifteen vessels have been chartered to ply back and forth between Stettin, Germany, and Narva and Riga, in Esthonia, and Bjorko, in Finland. When the first ship sailed, in early May, there were over 200,000 Russians still in Germany and an equal number of Central European prisoners still in Russia, Siberia, and Turkestan, of whom only about 25,000 were Germans, while the rest were Hungarians, Austrians, Czechs, Roumanians, Poles, and Serbs.

To date, about 30,000 prisoners have been repatriated each way, or a total of 60,000, via the Baltic route. The present weekly rate of repatriation on this route is 8,000, with the expectations of reaching 16,000—20,000 shortly.

The second route runs from Hamburg through the Red Sea to Vladivostok. By this route between 20,000 and 30,000 Austrians, Hungarians, Roumanians, and Poles still in eastern Siberia would be brought back, and roughly the same number of East Siberian Russians still in Germany taken out to their homes. Two vessels, each capable of taking 1,500 or 2,000 men per trip, have already been chartered for this work and cargoes secured, despite the difficulty of finding material for export from Germany to the Far East. The first will sail from Hamburg within the next ten days and the second shortly after. The deficit between the cost of chartering and operating the ships and the receipts from freight will be met out of the contribution made by the American Red Cross.

A third route, it is hoped, may be opened from southern Russia, where many prisoners are still detained, through the Black Sea to Triest, whence Russian prisoners still in Germany might be embarked for South Russian ports. It is hoped Italy will contribute the shipping necessary for this route.

Dr. Nansen is convinced that unless all the interested nations give their most immediate and earnest aid to this problem thousands of men who have for years endured the most terrible suffering will meet their death during the forthcoming winter. The condition of the prisoners now being repatriated is almost indescribably pitiful, for they come out of their long confinement not only without even the essential articles of clothing, but also very often in a desperately bad physical condition. Dr. Nansen feels that, though almost insurmountable difficulties are being encountered in finding shipping, in raising funds in this moment of financial stringency, and in carrying on the many-sided negotiations between Allied governments, former neutrals, ex-enemy governments, and the Soviet authorities, nevertheless the world owes a tremendous debt to these half million sufferers held prisoners under most terrible circumstances for two years after the Armistice, and that no effort must be spared to return them to their homes.